UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1991/SR.5
29 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. BADRAN (Egypt) said that the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Parts I and II and Part II/Add.1) showed that the needs of children in Africa far exceeded the capabilities of the countries of the region, no matter how responsible their leadership. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should therefore continue to give high priority to Africa in its budget and programming. The Bamako Initiative (E/ICEF/1991/L.6) should be fully funded. Women, however, had to be involved in its planning and decision-making phases, where they were currently regrettably underrepresented. The progress report on achievements made in the implementation of UNICEF policy on women in development (E/ICEF/1991/L.5) indicated that health programmes were fragmented and that the approach most of them took to maternal mortality and safe motherhood was too narrow. Thus, even as beneficiaries of UNICEF programmes, women found themselves in a deteriorating situation. UNICEF should hold firmly to a policy of recruiting women with technical expertise to regional and country offices. While UNICEF had, according to the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part II), para. 166), commendably attained its target of having one half of its core Professional posts occupied by women, her delegation would like to know what proportion of third-world women held posts and at what levels.

2. Egypt concurred with the priority to be given to basic education and especially the education of girls, and supported the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education contained in document E/ICEF/1991/L.13. However, only a tiny part of the UNICEF budget had been set aside for educational programmes, and the allocations for the Middle East and Africa - less than 5 per cent of the budget in both cases - were less than half those for Latin America and Asia. Those allocations should be revised to give a more equitable share to Africa and the Middle East.

3. Having reviewed the budget estimates in document E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1 and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on those estimates (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.10), Egypt supported the Committee's contention that UNICEF programme delivery should be improved, in order for it to become a truly effective agency, free from bureaucracy.

4. The Gulf crisis had had extremely adverse effects on the third world and on children and mothers in the Arab world in particular. UNICEF should work with all the countries involved, through all relevant programmes, to mitigate those effects. On the other hand, the crisis had created an awareness that genuine action lay in sustainable development based on democracy, which itself rested on full and adequate human development, beginning in childhood. Because of that awareness, Egypt had begun making strides in implementing the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and had enhanced the role of

(Mrs. Badran, Egypt)

its National Council for Maternity, which coordinated the efforts of the various Egyptian bodies involved in child welfare, such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Affairs, Information, Culture and Labour. The Council was taking a modern approach to its work that reduced expenditures. It had laid down a national policy for mothers and children in coordination with the relevant ministries and with international agencies that included UNICEF, UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as non-governmental organizations. The Council hoped that it could count on UNICEF support for its activities and policy planning.

5. Mr. VIQUEIRA (Spain) said that the 1990s had begun well, with increased international attention focused on the world of children. Unquestionably, UNICEF's own efforts to ensure the survival, protection and development of children and its social mobilization to that end had been decisive, earning it his own Government's highest decoration for meritorious social action.

6. A further task now facing UNICEF was to ensure the universal implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. State parties would of course implement the Convention differently, depending on their social, economic and legal system, yet all would be aiming to meet at least the same minimum standards. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, established under the Convention, would have his Government's full support. The Convention had entered into force in Spain in January 1991. As one of the architects of the Convention, Spain had not wished to enter reservations at the time of its ratification, but had made two interpretative declarations. In the first, Spain interpreted article 21 (d) of the Convention as meaning that intercountry adoption could never result in financial gain other than that needed to cover strictly necessary costs; in the second, Spain disagreed with the age limit set in article 38 (2) and (3) of the Convention, on the grounds that 15 years was too young.

7. In view of its new obligations under the Convention, Spain had begun work on a National Bill on the Rights of the Child, taking as its starting-point the concept of the child as a subject of law and adapting the principles of the Convention to the specific economic and social situation in Spain. His Government felt that regional instruments supplementing the Convention would be desirable as well.

8. In Spain, exhibitions and publications on the rights of the child had already been launched and a media campaign was under way, focusing on the child's two basic needs: protection and autonomy. The campaign's specific objectives were to promote responsibility in adults so that children could exercise their rights, not to minimize the difficulties facing adults in understanding and satisfying children's needs and to give credence to the idea that there were no perfect parents. The central message was that adults must learn to listen to what children had to say, so that they could help them play an active role in their environment and hence develop and grow in positive ways.

(Mr. Vigueira, Spain)

9. The commitments made by countries at the World Summit for Children were based on solidarity among States. His own Government had set up an interdepartmental commission to draw up guidelines for action throughout the decade, including cooperation with UNICEF programmes. At the same time, it had promulgated a law reforming the educational system, by which compulsory schooling had been extended to the age of 16 and the concept of pre-school education had been recognized.

10. Looking to the future, the international community must fulfil the pledges it had made to children in 1990, and UNICEF in particular must cooperate still more closely with other agencies of the United Nations system in using available funds as effectively as possible. The problems of the child must be seen as interrelated with development strategies and programmes involving other agencies. The important role assigned to UNICEF in implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit required the active cooperation of the developed countries, but also an adequate effort by the developing countries to make the most of any assistance received and to adopt appropriate national policies.

11. Welcome advances had been made in universal child immunization (UCI), but those countries where the targets had not been met should give priority to expanding participation and access to basic services.

12. His Government was especially concerned about the participation of women in development and had, since 1988, undertaken various activities to promote equal opportunities for women. With that same end in view, it was working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) on technical cooperation programmes with Latin America.

13. UNICEF should give priority to its programmes in Latin America, and especially to those being implemented in Africa through the Bamako Initiative. Children in especially difficult circumstances, such as Kurdish or Palestinian children and all those affected by the Gulf war, also required particular protection.

14. Ms. POULSEN (Denmark) said that while the World Summit for Children had been an impressive gathering of world leaders, reflecting a new focus on human values and human rights in all stages of life, starting with childhood, good intentions were not enough. If the United Nations was to make its proper contribution to development in general and child welfare in particular, there would have to be a more efficient division of labour among the various parts of the system.

15. UNICEF's programme was reasonably well-focused and its operational efficiency generally high, and it had, as was to be expected, a comparative advantage in the field of advocacy. The problems facing UNICEF were to some extent the reverse of its advantages. UNICEF was facing two trade-offs: a

(Ms. Poulsen, Denmark)

trade-off between advocacy and spectacular results on the one hand and optimum allocation of resources to achieve important but non-quantifiable results on the other; and a trade-off between getting things done with more spectacular efficiency in the short-term without integrating activities sufficiently into local institutional structures on the one hand, and capacity-building and sustainability on the other.

16. Those problems had to be faced and tackled. More attention must be given to integrated approaches, even if that meant a less satisfactory delivery rate, and to the optimum use of resources rather than the achievement of self-imposed quantitative targets. More attention would also have to be given to full cooperation with other parts of the United Nations system.

17. Two prerequisites for sustainable development were halting environmental degradation and checking population growth. UNICEF, which was participating actively in preparations for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, had the potential through its education activities to raise awareness from childhood onwards of the importance of environmental problems. It also contributed directly to environmental protection through its water and sanitation programmes. As for controlling population growth, Denmark felt that UNICEF had neglected family planning. Decision 1990/7, adopted by the Executive Board at Denmark's request, had been disappointing in that its references to family planning were somewhat bland and gave no idea of the extent of UNICEF activities. Denmark expected the next report to give more specific information on UNICEF family planning activities globally, not just in individual countries. The issue of family planning went far beyond safe motherhood and child spacing. Increased reliance on family planning was of overriding importance for social and economic development in general, for if fewer children were born, those there would have better access to education and health care, and the situation of women would improve. The magnitude of the problem was illustrated by the fact that in many developing countries, close to half the population was under the age of 16. As an organization devoted to dealing with the problems of mothers and children, UNICEF must give population issues a proper place in its activities. Women's right to control their own bodies and to determine the number and frequency of childbirths must be fully respected through access to family planning. Ironically, activities in other areas that were saving the lives of children were paving the way for a population explosion that would require strong family planning policies.

18. With regard to the 1992-1993 budget estimates in document E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1, Denmark generally shared the views of ACABQ and was especially concerned about the relative increase in administrative costs.

19. Mrs. CORNAZ (Switzerland) said that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children included a wide array of important tasks and responsibilities, some of which, but not all, were covered by UNICEF's mandate. Countries themselves, in both North and South, had primary responsibility, since most child suffering was man-made. At the same time, UNICEF's advocacy role remained important. It must continue to raise international awareness about the importance of taking the needs of children into account. Every country, Government or ministry, and every corporation and organization, should analyse regularly the impact of its actions on the situation of children. Otherwise, follow-up to the Summit would be confined to isolated actions and improvements would be limited.

20. In preparing country programmes, UNICEF should base its strategy on the goals of the Summit Declaration, the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, it should also urge individual countries to ascertain the actual situation of children within the national context, in order to determine what action needed to be taken. Such a laborious process of diagnosis was the only way to define effective measures and programmes. For example, her country had recently begun to address the problem of "hidden children" - children of seasonal foreign workers not entitled to enter Switzerland with their parents but smuggled in none the less. The search for ways to meet their education and health needs touched very closely on Swiss labour and immigration policy.

21. UNICEF must continue its vital work for the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, such as those affected by war and street children. It had a duty to be their advocate, especially in its contacts with Governments.

22. UNICEF should refine its evaluation methods and tools with a view to improving analysis of individual countries' ability to prepare and execute initiatives as a follow-up to the World Summit, as well as analysis of the durability and developmental impact of such initiatives.

23. Her delegation welcomed the emphasis on improving basic health services, and favoured adopting a global approach rather than concentrating on specific health aspects when helping countries improve such services.

24. Her delegation noted certain improvements concerning the transparency of data provided in the budget proposal, but endorsed ACABQ comments regarding the difficulty of estimating actual overheads and the costs of programme support activities. Programme resource reports and new programme budgets should indicate the proportion of expenditures allocated for staff, equipment, investment and other operating costs. Her delegation also urged the preparation of a contingency plan, in case the highly optimistic resource growth forecasts proved inaccurate, and believed that UNICEF should envisage a zero-growth option for its headquarters staff.

25. Mr. TORNUDD (Finland) noted that the major issues before the Executive Board included the budget estimates for 1992-1993 and UNICEF's role in the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. That follow-up should focus on the situation in developing countries and the challenges of the 90s, such as UNICEF's role in emergencies and an updated approach to basic services for children.

26. The year 1990 had culminated in the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the Plan of Action of the World Summit. Those normative and operational guidelines should be built into strategies for the 1990s. UNICEF must also clearly define its role as a development agency and as an advocate for children in both developing and developed countries. Its efficiency should be assessed on a country-by-country basis, and its contribution should be seen as part of a coordinated effort by all development partners at the country level.

27. The Executive Board should concentrate on clarifying the respective advocacy roles and responsibilities of the various units of UNICEF, field offices in particular. Advocacy for children need not be extended, but better focused. There was also a clear need for UNICEF to be an advocate for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

28. Since the Board's last session, the United Nations system had faced one of its most important challenges: the aftermath of the crisis caused by the occupation of Kuwait. For UNICEF that had meant providing disaster relief and emergency assistance to offset the most adverse consequences of the deteriorating situation for children. The international relief response had highlighted the need for the Board to further clarify UNICEF's role in emergencies. So far, that role had been defined only in terms of the target group, namely, children. However, a coherent international response to disaster situations through the established United Nations system should be based not only on the target group but on an effective division of tasks between the relevant organizations, according to their comparative advantages. UNICEF's approach of responding only to target groups had often resulted in lack of coordination and fragmented activities. UNICEF should contribute actively to the preparation of reports requested from the Secretary-General by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly analysing the United Nations response to emergency.

29. The primary health care sector also required further clarification. Under the widely accepted division of labour between UNICEF and WHO, UNICEF was operational in the field in supporting primary health care activities, while WHO was responsible for normative tasks. Country programmes were increasingly characterized by an integrated approach that included all aspects of primary health care and should also include family planning and AIDS control. Through the country programming process, an approach that was sustainable for each individual country should be determined, and should then be applied in cooperation with other United Nations organizations. The Bamako Initiative should be developed and tested in closer cooperation with WHO. In

(Mr. Tornudd, Finland)

that connection, his delegation believed that approaches like the vaccine independence initiative fell outside the UNICEF mandate, but that testing of the improved vaccines could be organized in connection with its immunization programmes.

30. The proposed budget did not meet the requirements of transparency and clarity and the information justifying income projections was inadequate. His delegation would like to know more about the work plan underlying the budget. The main concern should be to determine how to use available resources more efficiently. His Government was of the view that the budget process needed to be revised.

31. Mr. STAMPS (Zimbabwe) said that great achievements had taken place in the past year, providing the opportunity for significant change in the lives of children. His delegation appreciated the high priority still accorded to Africa by UNICEF. That priority must be translated into real and meaningful programmes in the field through increased budgetary and technical support, despite increasing demands from the Middle East and Eastern European regions. Africa's leaders had supported the World Summit for Children, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had taken a number of initiatives specifically related to children's issues.

32. Africa had made remarkable progress towards achieving universal child immunization by the year 2000, with no fewer than 25 countries expected to achieve their 1990s goal of protecting 75 per cent of children against the six main child-killer diseases. In implementing the goals of the World Summit, relief corridors had been established in Angola and the Sudan. African leaders had also fully endorsed the Bamako Initiative as a means of revitalizing primary health care on a sustainable basis. All those gains were being threatened, unfortunately, by the AIDS epidemic, which was seriously eroding achievements in Africa. Because 25 per cent of those dying of AIDS in that region were children under the age of four and 50 per cent of the remainder were young parents, UNICEF must now become actively involved in AIDS awareness and control programmes. His Government supported the UNICEF nutrition strategy and believed that it would contribute significantly towards the elimination of malnutrition in Africa.

33. In Africa, 10,000 children died and another 10,000 were crippled for life each day as a result of war and civil strife. Although his Government welcomed the positive steps proposed by the Pretoria regime towards dismantling apartheid, the children of southern Africa continued to bear a heavy burden and the number of children in difficult circumstances continued to increase exponentially. Rebel groups in Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were continuing their activities, and the increased violence was affecting children in particular. It was his Government's view that the time was not yet ripe for the world community to ease pressure on South Africa. That country was making clandestine attempts to acquire respectability through the support given to South African non-governmental organizations. Such

(Mr. Stamps, Zimbabwe)

organizations pursued the laudable aim of minimizing the trauma to children, but their efforts had the net effect of cushioning the Government of South Africa against its duty to protect South Africa's children, in an economy already adjusted in favour of the white, wealthy and healthy urban minority.

34. In Zimbabwe, the structural adjustment programme would impose new stresses on vulnerable groups, especially women and children, but in the long term should strengthen the economy. The impact of the Gulf crisis had also led to cuts in education, housing and health services. As the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade neared its end, many children would continue to suffer from the lack of a clean, safe water supply.

35. His delegation was concerned about the sufferings of Palestinian children living under difficult circumstances similar to apartheid. Urgent political decisions leading to a permanent solution of that issue were needed. The sufferings of the Iraqi people were a source of great sadness, and his delegation hoped that conditions in Kuwait would stabilize soon to enable children there to grow up and develop in a normal environment.

36. Turning to the budget, the overriding issue was the maintenance of UNICEF support for country activities. The budget should be a financial component of UNICEF goals and should be supportive of those objectives which emphasized performance in the field. His delegation supported the strengthening of field offices. It was rather concerned at criticisms of that approach from some of the most highly developed countries, which he hoped did not mask a wish to reduce contributions.

37. Mr. ROE (Republic of Korea) said that 1990 had been an historic year for children. By adopting the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, world leaders had committed themselves to the cause of children in a strong and eloquent manner. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been another milestone in efforts to enhance the rights and well-being of children. He also welcomed the progress achieved in universal child immunization. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to meet the goals for the 1990s which had been set at the previous session.

38. The following points should be taken into account during the discussion. First, the aim of UNICEF activities should be to ensure lasting benefits. Secondly, programmes should be evaluated in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It was necessary to focus on those who were most in need and had no access even to relief assistance programmes. Thirdly, priority should continue to be given to developing countries, particularly the least developed. In that connection, cooperation with other United Nations agencies, such as WHO and UNESCO, should be strengthened.

39. Since his Government attached great importance to human resources development, it supported a gradual but substantial increase in the proportion of UNICEF resources devoted to basic education. He believed that education for all could lead to health and welfare for all in the long run.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

40. The experience of the Republic of Korea underscored the unwelcome side-effects of rapid development. There was an increasing recognition by Governments and the general public of the need for more human services to address the various social problems arising from urbanization, such as juvenile delinquency, child abuse and the lack of day-care facilities. UNICEF should continue to be involved in efforts to solve those problems.

41. With regard to the national programme of action adopted by the Republic of Korea as a follow-up to the World Summit, his Government in 1991 had established the Ministry of Sports and Youth to formulate and coordinate policies involving children and youth. The outmoded Civil Code had been revised with a view to reducing the traditional disparities between girls and boys. Recently, free immunization had been provided to low-income families in an effort to maintain a level of approximately 90 per cent immunization coverage for infants. A special programme had also been introduced to contain the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Through the promotion of maternal and child health and family health programmes and family planning, the annual population growth rate had remained below 1 per cent. His country was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and would soon complete its ratification procedures. Lastly, his Government had increased its financial contribution to UNICEF for 1991 by almost 50 per cent. Discussions were taking place with UNICEF in order to ensure a smooth transition from a recipient to a donor relationship. A self-reliant National Committee for UNICEF would be established in the near future.

42. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that the year 1990 had been marked by events of historic importance, such as the World Conference on Education for All, the World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage had been achieved, thereby greatly improving prospects for the health and survival of children. UNICEF should take measures to sustain the momentum created in the past year and to further enhance public awareness of issues relating to children. For its part, Japan was currently preparing its national programme of action with a view to fulfilling the commitments which it had made in the context of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action.

43. Despite the progress made in 1990, serious problems remained. In sub-Saharan Africa, the situation of children had deteriorated as a result of the region's continuing economic decline, natural disasters, civil strife and AIDS. In his view, UNICEF should avoid expanding its area of activities beyond its mandate, especially to issues dealt with in other forums, such as debt alleviation and the environment. Rather, he felt that special importance should be attached to UNICEF activities in sub-Saharan Africa, and he welcomed the decision to increase the funding allocation to that region. Furthermore, greater efforts should be made to raise public awareness concerning AIDS and assistance to AIDS orphans should be increased.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

44. His delegation felt strongly that UNICEF should intensify its assistance in the area of universal basic education. With regard to health and sanitation, the level of child immunization in African countries must be raised to that of other regions, and the goal of universal immunization against measles should be pursued more actively. While welcoming the initiative taken by UNICEF to explore new and improved vaccines, he stressed the importance of cooperation with WHO, which had expertise in that area. For its part, Japan had been contributing to the expanded programme on immunization since 1988, providing medical equipment valued at 670 million yen for the control of infectious diseases, as well as multilateral and bilateral assistance through UNICEF to 13 countries. He noted with satisfaction that UNICEF had been highly successful in promoting the use of oral rehydration salts and controlling acute respiratory infections, and urged the continuation of those efforts.

45. Since the Board's previous session, a number of emergency situations had arisen, particularly in Asia and Africa, to which UNICEF had responded promptly. His country had been cooperating in those efforts on a case-by-case basis, extending assistance through UNICEF to Sri Lankans affected by civil strife and making financial contributions to UNICEF in order to assist Iraqi and Kuwaiti refugees in the Gulf region. He felt, however, that there must be closer coordination between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and that its role in such efforts should be more clearly defined.

46. With regard to the revised budget estimates for the biennium 1990-1991 and budget estimates for the biennium 1992-1993 (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.1), his delegation believed that, with the expansion in the programme budget, the administrative budget of UNICEF should be kept as lean as possible. In that connection, several issues raised in the ACABQ report on the budget estimates (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.10) should be considered, including the size of the administrative budget in relation to total expenditures and the trend towards a top-heavy structure at headquarters. With regard to the proposal to increase core posts both at headquarters and in the field, his delegation was not convinced that such a step was necessary and would therefore be unable to approve the request unless a more satisfactory explanation was forthcoming from the secretariat. He hoped that a careful review of the budget would be carried out at the next meeting of the Committee on Administration and Finance. He proposed that an invitation should be extended to the Chairman of ACABQ to attend that meeting so that an exchange of views could take place.

47. Lastly, it should be noted that the UNICEF budget, as presented, was extremely difficult to understand. It did not provide a detailed breakdown of items or justify them adequately. He hoped that UNICEF would make efforts to improve its budget presentation and that the Executive Director would give personal attention to the matter.

48. Mr. SALMERON (Nicaragua) said that, in the past 15 years, his country had suffered the consequences of war, which was the worst epidemic afflicting mankind. Of Nicaragua's 3.5 million inhabitants, 170,000 had been killed and 20,000 maimed, and 10,600 children had been orphaned. In the past 10 months, his country had had to cope with the additional burden of reintegrating 300,000 refugees. Because of the economic devastation wrought by the war, it was having extreme difficulty in dealing with those problems.

49. Children under 15, who represented 56 per cent of the population, were beset by hunger and disease. The infant mortality rate was 71.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. During the most recent measles epidemic, 750 children aged under 4 had lost their lives. Their immune systems had been weakened by malnutrition, despite the fact that in the past year his Government had been able to raise immunization coverage to 80 per cent. In that effort, helicopters formerly devoted to military purposes had been used to bring immunization to remote rural areas. However, the peasants in those areas were facing other serious problems, such as the lack of drinking water and the inability to meet their basic needs.

50. During the past decade, Nicaragua had figured prominently in the news, but with the war at an end, he feared that his country's needs might be forgotten. The Chamorro Government was endeavouring to make democracy a reality and to build a society based on social justice. As a member of the Executive Board, his country would be in a better position to encourage investment, so as to be able to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged groups who constituted 80 per cent of the population. UNICEF programmes, such as the Five-Year Integrated Rural Development Programme (PQDRI) and emergency assistance programmes, would help to provide a sound basis for democracy.

51. Mr. FORTIER (Canada) said that despite the impressive achievements of the past year, which included the adoption of the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the attainment of the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage for children in the developing world, the international community still faced serious problems caused by the rapid political, social and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, the consequences of the Gulf war, threats to the environment, external debt and the precarious social and economic situation in Africa.

52. To sustain the momentum generated by the World Summit, Canada was developing its own plan of action to fulfil its domestic and international commitments. For example, a major conference on micronutrients would be held at Montreal in July 1991 with the aim of helping developing countries end hidden hunger.

53. The operational activities of UNICEF were the backbone of its excellent reputation. UNICEF must strike a balance between basic programme delivery and the public information, advocacy and social mobilization efforts that promoted programme delivery. In the present circumstances, it would be difficult to

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

justify the diversion of resources from developing countries to finance follow-up measures to the Summit and the Convention in industrialized countries. In applying the strategies elaborated at the Summit, it was essential to be sensitive to national aspirations and circumstances. The goal should be to nourish national capacities to provide and manage health, education and basic social services; progress should not be measured by quantitative targets alone.

54. He welcomed the positive steps taken in the area of external relations, particularly the improved structural cooperation among the Division of Information, the Programme Funding Office, the Greeting Card Operation (GCO) and the Division of Public Affairs; the restructuring and strengthening of the Geneva office; and the improved quality of support to National Committees through the Division of Public Affairs. He looked forward to further improvements in that area.

55. Because of Canada's increasing debt, on which nearly one third of every tax dollar had to be spent, its administrative budgets had been frozen and its official development assistance budget would be constrained for some years to come. UNICEF must be cautious in its revenue projections, since it could not expect to sustain the significant programme growth of the 1980s. Resources must not be wasted, and some outdated programmes should be cut back so that UNICEF could respond to current needs. In view of the need for budgetary restraint, an increase of more than 30 per cent over the initial 1990-1991 budget was simply too high. The automatic cost increases in the intervening period called for even greater prudence in deciding on discretionary increases. The growth in administrative costs should in no circumstance exceed income projections, and caution should be exercised in considering proposals concerning organizational structures and classification. There was also a need for comprehensiveness and transparency in budget presentations. Since a variety of programme initiatives, such as the explosion in the number of project and core posts, had direct budgetary implications, the Board should be given a comprehensive overview of the programme support requirements of UNICEF. Lastly, the resources deployed through the budgetary process should be allocated first and foremost to substantive UNICEF programme activities.

56. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had recently completed an evaluation of its international immunization programme, over half of whose $54 million budget had been channelled through UNICEF. The results of that evaluation had been positive and included a number of case studies of UNICEF immunization programmes which might interest participants in those programmes Canada was currently coordinating an institutional evaluation of UNICEF in cooperation with Denmark, Switzerland, Australia and UNICEF personnel. That evaluation, which should be completed by 1992-1993, should provide valuable insights into the viability of health programmes, UNICEF as an institution, emergency relief programmes, evaluation and external relations.

57. Mr. ABU SALIH (Sudan) said that the Sudan's deep cultural commitment to children had been reflected in a 1990 declaration on immunization which had set the goal of achieving UCI by the end of the year; he was proud to announce that that goal had been reached. In addition, several national conferences had been held on issues related to the survival, protection and development of children, and had yielded a number of useful recommendations. The Sudan had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Head of State had signed the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. As a follow-up to the Summit, a law establishing a National Council for Children had been drafted and should be implemented shortly. A political declaration had been issued on the Sudan's commitment to achieving education for all by the year 2000, and an intersectoral committee had been established for follow-up and for the drafting of a plan of action to that end.

58. Despite the Sudan's aspirations for peace and genuine development, its children were suffering from the combined onslaught of external political factors, economic hardship, drought and civil war. It remained strongly committed to the humanitarian principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which were currently being applied in situations of armed conflict in Angola, Ethiopia and the Persian Gulf. Those principles included access to civilians in areas of conflict, neutrality of relief operations, corridors of tranquillity and cooperation with the international community, including non-governmental organizations. The Sudan saw no contradiction between humanitarian assistance to civilian populations and the principle of national sovereignty, provided that all parties honoured the terms of Operation Lifeline agreements. UNICEF had a key role to play in planning, monitoring and implementing conflict relief operations while maintaining impartiality and transparency.

59. Notwithstanding the Sudan's many achievements, thousands of its children died each year from preventable causes and almost half of all Sudanese children of the age of six did not attend school. His Government was tackling those problems in the broader context of the debt burden and economic stagnation which plagued the entire African continent. The Sudan was encouraged by achievements in the Middle East and North Africa in the areas of immunization, oral rehydration therapy (ORT) and the advancement of women. However, it was concerned about the unprotected Palestinian children and called on UNICEF to undertake a comprehensive study of that issue, similar to the study published on children in southern Africa. In addition, more effective programmes were needed in Iraq, Kuwait, Iran and Lebanon, where children had been traumatized by the effects of war.

60. The Sudan's newly established Ministry of Social Development and Welfare was formulating social development policies which relied on grass-roots advocacy and social mobilization. Its programmes were aimed at enhancing and expanding the capacities of local communities and the involvement of indigenous social institutions to permit greater mobilization of resources. The Ministry was also responsible for coordinating the national effort to

(Mr. Abu Salih, Sudan)

mitigate the adverse social effects of structural changes in the economy. To that end, all national social funds had been placed under its supervision. In that respect, he welcomed the decision of the Executive Director to appoint a Director for Emergency Programmes, and hoped that increased international assistance would benefit both relief and development activities in the Sudan. He also supported proposals to enhance the supervisory capacity of UNICEF in his country, and looked forward to an expanded country programme that would intensify the fruitful cooperation between the Sudan and UNICEF.

61. Ms. REHN (Chairman, Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF) said that the ground-breaking events of the past two years, including the rapid ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the attainment of UCI goals in most developing countries and the successful World Summit for Children, had shown that priorities must be clearly defined and that action programmes must be realistic and carefully planned. If the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Summit were not translated into concrete development programmes, with adequate financing and binding commitments from the Governments of both industrialized and developing countries, little progress would be possible. She was less than optimistic about the possibility of raising the necessary funds, in view of the continuation of policies which aggravated the situation of children and women in many countries in spite of the goals set forth in official declarations. However, the Convention was an important instrument which would enable the National Committees to continue their advocacy efforts with increased vigour.

62. The overall framework for development cooperation was currently jeopardized by the hardening of the economic climate and the resulting unwillingness of many countries to seriously discuss a radical redirection of funds to better serve the most vulnerable groups in developing countries. National Committees had an obligation to persuade their Governments to raise the share of basic health, family planning, nutrition, education and other social programmes to 35 or even 40 per cent of the total development assistance budget. In view of the growing crisis in the developing world, especially in Africa, it was more vital than ever that the industrialized countries use development assistance money to help the poorest groups in the poorest countries to help themselves. UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to reduce the debt burden of developing countries and its effects on children and women.

63. Although resolution 1990/5 was still relevant to the rapidly changing situation in Central and Eastern Europe, UNICEF should be extremely careful about committing its resources to activities in industrialized countries, especially since very little of the money approved for Eastern Europe had as yet been spent. UNICEF should be equally careful about initiating new activities elsewhere in the industrialized world, since its primary commitment was to poor countries. The conversion of the National Committees of Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries into independent non-governmental organizations, following the pattern in other industrialized countries, was therefore a welcome development.

(Ms. Rehn)

64. In the 1980s, UNICEF had conducted successful UCI and ORT campaigns. In the coming decade, therefore, more resources could be allocated to programmes in such areas as drinking water and sanitation, basic health, family planning, education and nutrition. Since public opinion in many countries gave priority to those areas, greater emphasis on them would benefit the advocacy efforts of UNICEF. She hoped that the Fund's strengthened relationship with UNESCO would encourage it to allocate more funding to the education of women and that its closer cooperation with UNFPA would lead it to take a more active role on the sensitive issue of family planning, which was cause for considerable public concern. In addition to its increased cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNICEF should, as soon as possible, analyse its field programmes from an environmental standpoint and formulate a clear-cut policy that could be conveyed to the Governments and populations of individual countries.

65. Since the success of efforts on behalf of UNICEF depended primarily on the Fund's public image, she was concerned about the prevailing perception of UNICEF as an emergency-oriented organization similar to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Public information about UNICEF should more accurately reflect all of its field activities, including its successes in such areas as drinking water and sanitation, education, public health care, nutrition and appropriate technology. UNICEF information policy should be much more positive, underlining the Fund's own achievements and also what the developing countries themselves had done to improve the situation of children and women. In addition, the Geneva office should be given more authority to develop an effective information strategy in cooperation with the National Committees.

66. In a rapidly changing world situation, the role of the National Committees as vital links between UNICEF headquarters and the general public was crucial. Since the Committees were familiar with the concerns of ordinary people and maintained close contacts with decision makers at all levels, their views should be given more weight in the planning and decision-making process for UNICEF programmes, in accordance with the recommendations of the 1989 evaluation of the external relations policies and functions of UNICEF. Although the recommended review of the recognition agreements between UNICEF and the Committees had begun, it still seemed that with the exception of GCO, the UNICEF secretariat did not regard the Committees as true partners. Therefore, in preparing new recognition agreements, closer cooperation between the Committees and UNICEF should be seriously considered. Like field offices, National Committees should be drawn into the planning process. The outstanding efficiency of GCO demonstrated the advantages of a flexible mode of operation, and she hoped that the recent changes at the highest management level of GCO would not limit that flexibility.

67. Despite her many criticisms, she believed that cooperation between the Committees and the secretariat had greatly improved, inter alia through the regular exchanges of views with the Executive Director. Similar arrangements

(Ms. Rehn)

for discussions with the Deputy Executive Directors would also be mutually beneficial. Another positive sign was the support which many Committees had received recently from both New York and Geneva in their efforts to develop their volunteer sector. Lastly, she was pleased that the issue of education for development, a major concern of almost every Committee, was once again emerging as a vital source of new ideas in the UNICEF secretariat.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.